

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

FEATURE

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PERCH

Perhaps no group of fresh water fish has as much confusion over names as the one called the perch family by fishery biologists. Anglers in many sections of the country readily recognize "yellow perch" as the most prevalent species of the family, but for some of the others, including the walleye and sauger, fishermen tack on the word "pike."

Even the biologists add to the confusion by accepting the term "blue pike" for one of the species. Over 100 members of the family are darters and arouse little interest from anglers because they are little more than "minnow" size.

But no matter what you call them, the walleye, sauger, and yellow perch provide an extra reward for the effort spent catching--they are excellent provender. The blue pike formerly was an important commercial and sport fish, but in recent years its numbers have declined, and the fish is now considered an endangered species.

The yellow perch feeds on insects, but the walleye and sauger feed mainly on fish. The latter are classed as cool water fish, but may do well in warmer waters. The best walleye fishing is found in waters containing excellent yellow perch populations, which serve as forage along with other fish such as shad.

Spawning takes place in spring just after ice melts in the more northern waters. Eggs and young receive no parental care. The sauger and walleye cast their eggs on rocky, gravelly, or sandy bottoms, while the yellow perch leaves its contribution to future angling as floating ribbons of eggs which may catch on rocks, branches, or pier posts. All of the species thrive in rivers or lakes.

The yellow perch ranks behind the bluegill in fishing popularity, but the gourmet rates the perch superior if only because it has more flesh. The fish has many names, but it is readily recognized by its greenish-yellow body with up to nine broad dark vertical bands extending from the back to the whitish belly. Natural distribution is from Canada to the Carolinas in the East and Kansas in the West, but it has also been introduced into Rocky Mountain and Pacific State waters. When fully grown the yellow perch may be a foot long and weigh more than a pound. The world record yellow perch caught by a fisherman weighed 4.75 pounds.

The walleye acquired its name because of its large, opaque, almost blind-looking eyes. Color is brassy to olive-buff, sometimes shading to yellowish sides and white beneath. Its original distribution in Canada and the neighboring Great Lakes region of the United States has been extended far southward by successful transplants. Some walleyes grow to over 36 inches and weigh 20 pounds. The world record is over 40 inches, weighing 25 pounds.

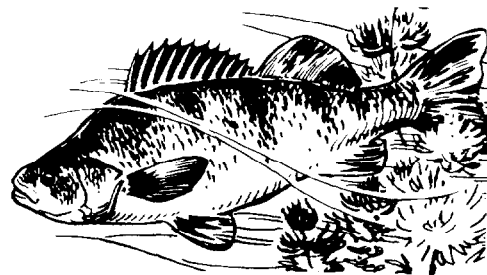
The sauger, primarily a Mississippi Valley fish, may rarely grow to 8 pounds. It is the "junior walleye," but its coloration is different--olive-gray with brassy or yellowish-orange sides mottled with dark blotches.

Many kinds of lures and live baits do well for the big three of the family, particularly the yellow perch. Once a school of yellows is located, anglers use a variety of tackle, including "droplines" and flyrods. As for walleye, trolling deep with live minnows or spoons in larger waters requires patience, but the reward is bigger fish.

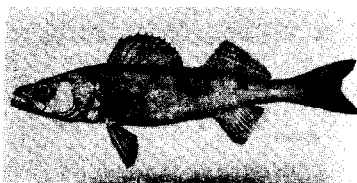
The Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service and some of the State fishery agencies catch sexually mature females and males, strip and fertilize the eggs, and grow hatched young in hatcheries until ready for planting.

The big three are still quite prevalent and a source of considerable sport and food for U.S. anglers, but whether they can continue to be so depends on halting the growing pollution of waters. Like most fish, the true perches are indicators of pollution and a declining fishery may indicate a degradation of the water by industrial or domestic sewage.

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YELLOW PERCH



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